



ZANE RITT | PHOTOGRAPHER

Senior quarterback Kellen Clemens has supported his teammates from the sidelines for the last three games of the season while healing from a spiral fracture in the fibula of his left leg.

Broken but not beaten

Even after his season-ending ankle injury, senior Kellen Clemens has continued to be a team leader

BY SHAWN MILLER
SPORTS EDITOR

Kellen Clemens went from whipping boy to poster child in a matter of months, but as his senior season at Oregon wraps up, thoughts of what could have been loom large.

Records would have been broken and awards won. Instead, Clemens spent the final month of the regular season on the sidelines after sustaining a season-ending spiral fracture in the fibula of his left leg and soft tissue damage in the left ankle during an Oct. 22 game at Arizona.

Clemens was horsecollared, which is illegal in the NFL, and knew there was a bone break as soon as he hit the grass.

"I knew it was broken, but I thought well maybe I could make it back for the bowl game," Clemens said. "The emotions came Sunday when the x-rays came in."

The senior was lost for the season. "It was real hard," Oregon receiver Demetrius Williams said. "He's like a brother. You watch him go down and it ends like that for him. It's kind of difficult to watch that happen. You just want to make the best of it, try to do the best you can, not

just for you but for him also."

The normal healing rate for such a serious injury is four to six months.

"Normal isn't what we are shooting for," Clemens said. "I'm five weeks ahead of schedule and I am six weeks in right now."

Clemens is scheduled for another surgery on Jan. 2 and should be able to start walking without crutches afterward. A month later he should be able to run, while it will take a second month before his leg and ankle are close to 100 percent.

Since his on-field time has been cut short, Clemens feels his role is mostly moral support and to provide guidance for the new quarterbacks, which began soon after the trainers removed his cleats following the injury.

"(I) went into the locker room to get it wrapped up and then one of the trainers came in and said, 'We need you out here to signal because (fellow quarterback) Dennis (Dixon) just got his bell rung,'" Clemens said.

Clemens has continued to support and teach, while the new starting quarterbacks have led the Ducks to three wins and to finish the regular season ranked fifth in the country with a 10-1

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